

GOLDEN TRIANGLE : DRUGS

Wash Post
3/16/90

Asian Drug Lord Indicted As Major Heroin Pusher

'Golden Triangle' Figure Has Private Army

By Bill McAllister
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Justice Department announced yesterday the indictment of a Southeast Asian drug lord who for 20 years has run one of the world's largest opium operations under the protection of his own private army.

Attorney General Dick Thornburgh held out no immediate hope that the 10-count drug-trafficking indictment of Khun Sa by a federal grand jury in New York City would lead to his arrest in Myanmar (formerly Burma), a country whose anti-drug efforts were recently criticized by the State Department.

"I don't state any grounds of optimism or pessimism, just determination," said Thornburgh. He said the indictment was the latest in a series that has targeted some of the world's major drug traffickers, an effort he likened to a fictitious dismembering of Chrysler Corp.

"If someone were interested in disabling Chrysler Corporation, they wouldn't begin by seizing one LeBaron at a time. They would try to go to Mr. Iacocca and remove him from the organization and attack the bank accounts and holdings, [and] physical assets of that corporation." Lee A. Iacocca is chairman of Chrysler.

There is no dispute among drug authorities that Khun Sa, protected by an army estimated at between 4,000 and 10,000 men, heads one of the world's largest drug empires. The region he controls is suspected of producing more than 40 percent of the heroin used in the United States and his organization is believed to have supplied American servicemen with heroin during the Vietnam war.

Although he has been wanted by authorities in neighboring Thailand since 1976, Khun Sa has eluded capture the few times authorities have attempted to arrest him in the portion of Asia's Golden Triangle that his forces control. He has welcomed reporters and some congressional officials to his remote headquarters, boasting of his drug operations and saying he would gladly order a halt to the opium production he controls, if either the United States or the United Nations would buy out the crop. In 1977 he placed



DICK THORNBURGH
... expresses "determination"

the price at \$36 million; more recently it has been in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

"Khun Sa has described himself as 'prince prosperous,' but as the largest dope pusher in the Golden Triangle, the title of prince of death for thousands of heroin addicts in the United States might be more apt," Thornburgh said yesterday.

The New York indictment was part of an investigation growing out of what he described as the largest heroin seizure in the world—1,086 kilograms in Bangkok in February 1988. The Golden Triangle region of Laos, Thailand and Myanmar produces about 45 percent of the heroin consumed in the United States.

The indictment was returned by a grand jury in Brooklyn in December, but it was not unsealed until yesterday because of what Thornburgh would describe only as "sensitive matters."

Thornburgh said he regards heroin as posing "potentially a very grave threat" as a result of recent pressure on cocaine trafficking. ". . . The drug of choice, particularly in smokable form, which is now available, may become heroin," he said.

PR|SA|GT-01

Thai-Burma anti-drug proposal gets a boost

THANA POOPAT
The Nation

JOINT narcotics suppression proposed by Thailand and Burma received a boost as the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC) offered financial assistance for opium poppy eradication and crop substitution programmes in the Golden Triangle, a Thai anti-drug chief said.

Pol Lt Gen Chavalit Yodmani, secretary general of Office of the Narcotics Control Board (ONCB), told *The Nation* yesterday that the UNFDAC in January offered to assist the joint drug control efforts in the world's major poppy-growing area, where the borders of Burma, Thailand and Laos converge.

"The UNFDAC had expressed interest in helping Burma and Thailand in our joint efforts against drugs after seeing how two years of virtual neglect on the part of the Burmese government in its anti-narcotics programmes has resulted in a dramatic increase in opium production," Chavalit said.

The Burmese military regime, preoccupied with cracking down on dissidents and its ethnic minorities, basically stopped its anti-narcotics programmes after seizing power and violently crushing pro-democracy movements in September 1988.

The United States, a major contributor to narcotics suppression in Burma, suspended its assistance to the country after accusing the Burmese military leaders of colluding with drug traffickers and widespread human rights abuse.

The ONCB chief said the UNFDAC would solicit money from donor countries to help fund the proposed joint narcotics control efforts after Thailand and Burma came up with a definite proposal on how and where the programme was to be carried out. This includes an information-sharing network on those known to be involved in the production and trafficking of heroin in the two countries.

Chavalit said Thai, Burmese and UNFDAC officials are scheduled to meet in Bangkok in June to discuss the details of the bilateral narcotics control programme.

According to the anti-drug chief, Thailand and Burma initially agreed that the joint drug control programme should be carried out in the area north of Thachilek in Burma's northeastern Shan State. The area is opposite Chiang Rai's Mae Sai and Mae Chan districts in Thailand.

"The Burmese government chose the area to launch the programme as they claim to be in complete control of the area," he said.

An ONCB source said the area covers between 1,500 to 2,000 square kilometres of the Shan State, making up the greater part of the Golden Triangle. The opium poppy eradication

and crop substitution programme, if successful, would be implemented in other parts of Burma where Rangoon can exert its authority, the source said.

Under the crop substitution programme, opium-growers are encouraged to switch to "higher-earning" legal crops, build roads and help market their produce. Among the most popular replacement crops are coffee, tomatoes, strawberries, and beans.

It is estimated that up to 2,400 tonnes of heroin was produced in the Golden Triangle, now regarded as the world's biggest source of opium, during the past growing season (September 1989-February 1990) — more than double the level of the previous growing season.

Thailand's opium poppy eradication and crop substitution efforts have been among the world's most successful, reducing local opium output to between 30 and 40 tonnes last year, compared with 150 tonnes in 1970.

But the success has been marred by influx of opium and its derivative, heroin, from the Golden Triangle, which is smuggled through Thailand to drug users around the world. Thailand, with one of the best transport networks in the region, is a major transit point for heroin destined for the United States and Western Europe.

■ Commenting on the US court indictment of drug warlord Khun Sa, Chavalit said Thai law enforcement officials have been instructed to apprehend Khun Sa if and when he is found in Thai territory.

"Thai law enforcement authorities have also issued warrants for the arrest of Khun Sa for a number of drug offences. But we will not violate another country's sovereignty in trying to get hold of the man," he said.

In one of the cases in which Khun Sa was implicated both in Thailand and the United States, more than one tonne of heroin was seized at the Bangkok port of Klong Toey in 1988 as it was about to be shipped to the United States.

The US Justice Department said two weeks ago it had indicted Khun Sa on 10 drug-trafficking charges related to vast quantities of heroin smuggled into the United States between 1986 and 1988.

On Monday, visiting Assistant US Secretary of State Melvyn Levitsky, in charge of the US drug policy, said in Bangkok that the US government will not take any military action to try to apprehend the notorious drug kingpin. But he said the US has sought cooperation from Thailand in tracking down Khun Sa.

Khun Sa, who commands a private army of more than 8,000 men in highland regions of the Shan State, is responsible for about 70 per cent of the total heroin production in the Golden Triangle.

PRISA/GT-02

PR|SA|GT-03

Narcotics News Update - 9/9/89

We have learned that the Kokang leaders, formerly under the CPB, are going all out to cultivate poppies and produce opium. The Kokang district is already the number one opium growing area in the Golden Triangle. The current price of opium is approx. Kyats 7,000 in the open market but the Kokang leadership have artificially suppressed the price and by order, are forcing the villagers to sell opium to the Kokang leadership for Kyats 4,800.

In addition, villagers who did not grow opium are being forced to buy opium in the open market for Kyats 7,000 and then are forced to sell the opium back to the Kokang authorities for Kyats 4,800.

The opium that is collected in this way is being refined into heroin and smuggled to outside markets in 50 gallon barrels with the cooperation of the Burma Army and Lo Hsing Han.

The Northern Shan State Burma Army Commander, Brig Maung Tint, visited the Kokang area this past June and he gave the Kokang officials government approval to continue growing opium. When Brig Maung Tint left the Kokang area he took with him an unspecified quantity of heroin.

The locations where the Kokang are refining heroin include:

1. Mung Hom - 3 locations
2. Mung Gu - 1 location
3. Hpong Seng - 1 location

It is known that a veteran CPB cadre named Ye Hu of Chinese nationality has been given permission from the Kokang authorities to operate and refine heroin in their territory and under their protection.

It has also been learned that the Burma Army is encouraging villagers in the Putao area of northern Kachin State to grow opium as well.

In the Northern Shan State, in the Kachin Substate area, near Lashio and Dang Yan towns and along the Loi Chye area, the Rangoon military authorities have given the local population permission and encouragement to grow opium.

In the Mung Dun and Mung Sat areas, when the Hlung Hting or Burmese Security forces arrived, they began encouraging the local population to increase opium production.

The commander of the Burma Army Regiment 49 based in Mung Dun has been collecting taxes from the villagers and has assigned the Na Kong Mu People's Militia the task of refining opium. They have now set up 3 facilities/refineries between Na Kong Mu and Mung Dun.

The price of raw opium along the Thai border is now about Kyats 10,000.

PR/SA/GT-04

BANGKOK POST FRIDAY OCTOBER 6, 1989

Loggers 'won't take risk in drugs trade'

Chiang Mai — No logging companies would take the risk of smuggling narcotic drugs from Burma to Thailand, a logging concessionaire said yesterday.

Chukiat Puvapirom, manager of Union Par Ltd, was commenting on reports that some logging firms were using timber-hauling routes to smuggle into Thailand heroin acquired from Burmese drug barons.

Mr Chukiat said he believed none of the logging firms would risk their businesses in this way.

He said all firms wanted to be awarded contracts from Burma.

"Nobody dare do it (traffic in drugs)," he said.

Mr Chukiat said he had instructed all his workers to "work like heroes".

He said he had warned them of the hardships of logging in Burma, such as climbing high mountains and the risks of being killed by booby traps and mines.

Transportation costs were very high, he said, adding that sending rice to his workers in Burma cost about 1,000 baht per

Burmese team agrees to damages for incursion

Mae Sot — A Burmese delegation inspecting damage to Thai villages caused by the Burmese suppression drive against minority rebels agreed to the Thai side's estimate of 19 million baht compensation.

In a memorandum signed yesterday after a three-day meeting on the matter at the Mae Sot Hill Hotel, both sides agreed to forward the estimate to a higher level meeting of the joint border coordinating committee tentatively scheduled for December in Burma.

Col Myo Myint, chairman of the Karen State Law and Order Restoration Council, signed for the Burmese delegation while Third Army deputy chief-of-staff Col Sema Yoosathaporn signed in the name of the Thai delegation.

Col Sema said he will forward the

agreement to higher units so that compensation can be made as soon as possible.

Both sides agreed that measures should be adopted to prevent further damage to people living along the border, he said.

One of the measures is to install a hot line to maintain close contact between Thai and Burmese authorities in Mae Sot and Myawaddy and a communication system has been installed since the middle of last month, Col Sema said.

The Burmese delegation went to inspect the damage caused between September last year and July this year in four villages in Tha Song Yang and Mae Sot districts during their visit here, said a Third Army source.

sack.

Meanwhile, Third Army Deputy Commander Maj-Gen Anant Bamrungpruek said yesterday that the Army is still worried that Thai loggers might smuggle drugs into Thailand and smuggle weapons to minority groups in Burma.

He said he was not worried about the concessionaires, for they always complied with the law.

However, it was the sub-contractors who worried him.

Maj-Gen Anant said that at present Thai loggers are allowed to haul

logs from Burma through 28 border passes — four in Chiang Mai, 13 in Mae Hong Son and 11 in Tak.

He said there were three passes in Mae Hong Son where concessionaires had to build roads into Burma to haul logs out.

These three routes

were close to the area controlled by drug warlord Khun Sa, he said.

One road which a concessionaire was planning to build in Burma would pass through Khun Sa's headquarters, Maj-Gen Anant said.

He said he had called the concessionaire in for talks and asked him to comply strictly with the law and refrain from any illicit business because the Third Army had already posted intelligence officials in the area to monitor all illegal activities.

Mae Hong Son Deputy Governor Sirithat Suwan said log poaching is still going on near the Burmese border.

He said poachers cut down trees on the Thai side, smuggle them across to Burma and then bring them back to Thailand disguised as Burmese timber.

Col Sirithat said provincial authorities had been informed of this practice.

He said some concessionaires had claimed they had mistakenly cut down trees on the Thai side because the border was not clearly defined.

PR1 SA/ GT-05

WASH POST JULY 23, 1991 P. A10

U.S. Tightens Sanctions Against Myanmar

Textile Pact Not Renewed; Drug Traffic, Political Repression Cited

Associated Press

The Bush administration said yesterday it was imposing more trade sanctions against Myanmar—the world's largest opium producer—because of lack of progress in curbing narcotics flow and in easing political repression.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said that as part of a stepped-up program of economic denial against Myanmar, the administration has decided not to renew a bilateral textile agreement that lapsed at the end of 1990.

That measure means Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, will have no textile quota and therefore access to U.S. markets will be more difficult. Myanmar earned \$9 mil-

lion from textile exports to the United States last year, about 40 percent of its total exports here.

The administration acted under an amendment that calls for new sanctions if President Bush certifies that Myanmar has not made progress on human rights or in suppressing narcotics flow.

In 1988, Myanmar cracked down on a pro-democracy movement and ended a program to eradicate its opium crop. As a result, opium production has doubled to an estimated 2,250 tons.

National elections held in the spring of 1990 were won by opposition parties, but the military government ignored the results. U.S. officials, who asked not to be identified, said they believe there are

thousands of political prisoners and cite credible reports that some have been tortured.

A U.S. development assistance program totaling \$7 million was terminated three years ago, along with a \$5 million narcotics cooperation program.

U.S. trade preferences also have been suspended and the United States has been opposing Burmese loan requests at the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other international financial institutions. U.S. arms sales to Myanmar also are prohibited.

Virtually all other aid-donor nations refuse to implement new bilateral aid programs or to authorize arms sales to Myanmar, the officials said.

PR/SA/GT-06

NATION 8/9/91

Thai-Burma military action plan

KORKHET CHANTALERTLUK
The Nation

THAI and Burmese military have agreed to launch a sustained "search-and-destroy" campaign to suppress the personal army of drug kingpin Khun Sa and disrupt its heroin production in the Golden Triangle, military sources told *The Nation* yesterday.

The United States has agreed to extend Bt1 billion to fund the campaign whose details are still under the wrap, the sources said.

The main thrust of the campaign is to search and destroy Khun Sa's forces and disrupt their ability to produce and

distribute heroin through Thailand.

The sources said Thai troops would form the backbone of the operations, expected to start late this month in the border areas opposite Mae Hong Son province in northern Thailand. The campaign, which was agreed upon by the three sides, will be sustained until "we can extirpate the world's largest narcotics production movement", the sources said.

There was no time-frame set for the conclusion of the campaign, the sources said.

Khun Sa's Muang Tai army is estimated to have a strength of about 5,000 men.

The Burmese military, the sources said, had more logistics problems than the Thai side and would therefore support the offensive by forcing Khun Sa's men from areas deep inside Burma towards the border.

The sources said the Thai military had decided that it was time to go after Khun Sa's forces relentlessly to show to the world that Thailand took a serious view of the narcotics problem.

The Thai military has also learned that the operations of Khun Sa's forces were greatly damaging to Thailand's economic and security interests.

The sources said a group of Thai loggers who won concessions from

ned to wipe out Khun Sa's bases

Burma had colluded with Khun Sa in depleting Thai forest on the border.

"With assistance from Khun Sa, Thai trees were felled, transported into Burmese territory and brought into Thailand as if they were products of the logging concessions in Burma," said one source who asked not to be identified.

The sources also said that the unscrupulous Thai loggers also supplied war weapons to Khun Sa's army.

Khun Sa has probably expected the forthcoming military campaign against his army after the Third Army Region ferociously bombed his strongholds in Doi Lakaeng and Doi Laem inside

Burma close to the border district town of Mae Ai in Chiang Mai last month.

The Third Army Region resorted to artillery shelling, aerial bombing and strafing by helicopter gunships in the operation against the outlawed force's hide-outs on the two hills in what was officially described as retaliation for the deaths and injuries caused by stray mortar shells supposedly fired by Khun Sa troops.

The mortar shells landed on the Thai side during a flare-up between Khun Sa's army and the rival Wa force, a minority Burmese movement seeking to capture Khun Sa's strongholds.

Khun Sa's forces finally retreated

from the bases as a result of the battering they took from the Thais.

The retaliation to "protect the lives and properties of Thai villagers on the border" dealt a heavy blow to Khun Sa because Mae Ai district, which is just about 2.5 km from the drug lord's former base on Doi Lakaeng, was the major source of supply for his outlawed army.

"We practically cut a major lifeline of Khun Sa's army," one source said.

The Muang Tai army established its strongholds on the two hills two years ago and reportedly used Mae Ai and Fang districts as the main routes to smuggle narcotic products.